

Week 4 Report of Our Virtual Walk from Poland to Rome 10-13 through 10-19

During this week we collectively walked 388 miles and had 16 participants. Sources for images are given in smaller font near the image. You can click on images to increase their size for a better view. The green line on map of The Czech Republic indicates places we visited this week. We started the week outside of Prague which is the first green dot. A red line on the route map indicates general route for entire walk, image right.

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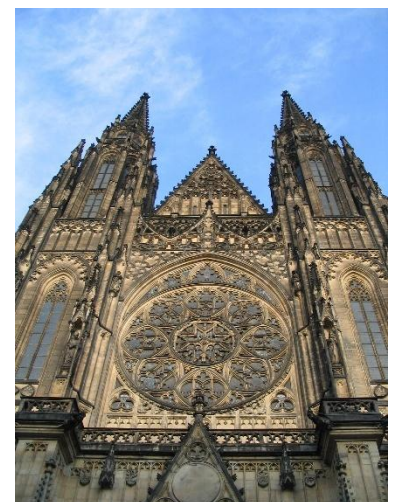
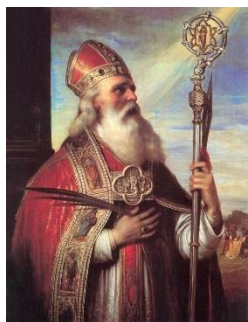
We didn't have very far to go before we reached Prague as we started Week 4. Prague is a lovely city and popular with tourists. Some people call it the "Paris of the East". It has many wide streets and lots of beautiful sights to see. Fortunately, it did not suffer too much in WW II nor did the communism after WW II seem to affect it too much. So, it retains much of its old-world charm that has been lost in some other eastern European cities. We will see some of this as we walk around the city.



But our first stop was at the Saint Vitus Cathedral, shown below left, which is part of the Prague Castle complex. Alvesgaspar – Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons, left 投稿者, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons, right

Formally, the name of this cathedral is the Metropolitan Cathedral of Saints Vitus, Wenceslaus and Adalbert but is commonly just called St. Vitus Cathedral. St. Vitus was a Sicilian martyr and is considered one of the 14 Holy Helpers. Saint

Adalbert had a serious childhood illness from which he recovered. Mihály Kovács, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons, left After his recovery, his parents dedicated him to religious life and later he became a priest. He was appointed as Bishop of Prague and served there for about 6 years. Many of the sins Adalbert preached against—such as slavery—resulted in his being unpopular. His family was powerful and at one point all of his brothers were murdered. St. Adalbert fled from the country fearing for his life. Although he was



called back to Prague a few years later, he resisted returning and was relieved of his role as bishop. He

then served a missionary to various other groups such as the Prussians, the Poles, and Hungarians. It was during his missionary work to the Baltic Prussians that he was martyred.

The Cathedral contains the relics of Saint Wenceslas, the first named saint of the Czech Republic and the “Good King Wenceslas” we sing about at Christmas time. The cathedral was begun in 1344 and the chapel of St. Wenceslas, which contains the tomb of the saint, was consecrated in 1367 but the rest of the cathedral took until 1770 to complete. A new addition was added to the west part of the Cathedral in 1929. The chapel of the saint is quite beautiful with thousands of precious stones and beautiful paintings on the walls. It is considered the most sacred in the country and attracts multitudes of pilgrims annually. The head of Saint Luke the Evangelist has been kept as a relic in the cathedral here while the rest of his body can be found in Padua, Italy in the Basilica of St. Justina.

Saint Wenceslaus was a real person, not just some fable we sing about at Christmas. He was born in 907 near Prague in what was called Bohemia. He was the son of the Duke of Bohemia. His grandparents were converted to Christianity by Cyril and Methodius. During that time there was a great deal of political intrigue in Bohemia. While his mother was around and favored anti-Christian factions in her politics, Wenceslaus was taught Christianity by his grandmother, Ludmilla and he was sent to a college at an early age in Budeč, 9 miles north of Prague. After his father’s death when Wenceslaus was just 13, his grandmother Ludmilla served as regent because Wenceslaus was too young to govern. But then his mother had Ludmilla assassinated so she could become regent. When he turned 18, Wenceslaus became the ruler of the government. He worked to unify Bohemia, support Christianity, and negotiate for peace with Germany. This however, angered the anti-Christian opposition in Bohemia. His brother, Boleslav, was part of the opposition and set up a plan to remove Wenceslaus. In 929 on the way to church, Boleslav and others attacked Wenceslaus who was killed in the fighting. Wenceslaus’ death at age 27 was political in nature; his brother Boleslav became the new ruler of government and because Boleslav was anti-Christian, Wenceslaus was seen as a Christian martyr. Pilgrims began journeying to his tomb almost immediately.

Among his actions as ruler of Bohemia, Wenceslaus brought in German priests who used the Latin rite instead of the old Slavic liturgy; in many places there were not enough priests who knew the Slavic liturgy to conduct masses. Another of Wenceslaus’ contributions was to build a rotunda on the Prague Castle grounds that was consecrated to St. Vitus. That rotunda became the basis of the current Cathedral. Wenceslaus is considered the patron of the Bohemian people.

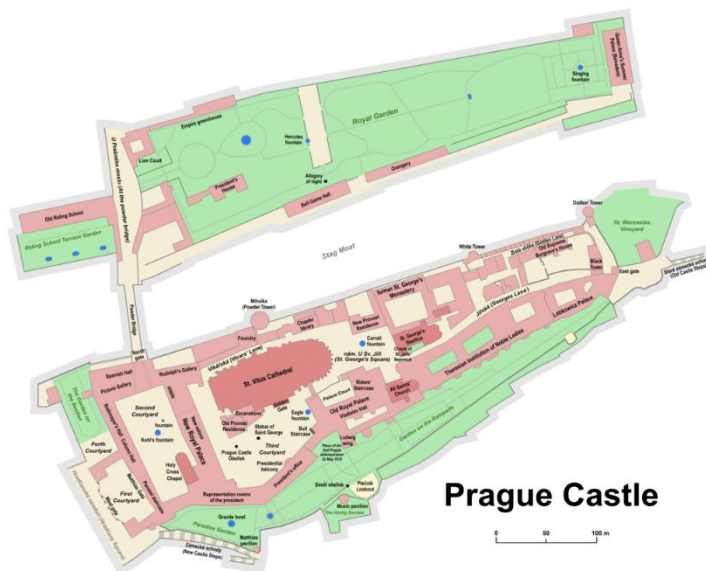
Wenceslaus was known for his piety and his caring for others. He was considered a saint by many Bohemians from immediately after his death. Several biographies were written within a few decades of his death extolling his piety and good deeds for the poor, for visiting the churches and giving alms to people experiencing any difficulties. Pope Pius II declared these things were indeed factual. Wenceslaus was canonized as a saint only three years after his death. The Holy Roman Emperor Otto I posthumously proclaimed Wenceslaus a regal title which is why he is referred to as King rather than Duke. There is a St. Wenceslaus hymn which is the best-known religious song in Bohemia. In 1918 this hymn was considered for the national anthem of the newly formed Czechoslovak state.

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This statue of Wenceslaus along with other Bohemian patrons is found in Wenceslaus Square in Prague. We stopped to visit the square during our time in Prague a bit later in our tour of Prague.

After visiting the Cathedral, we then explored the castle area which included the former St. George’s Monastery and the Basilica of St. George. The diagram below shows how enormous the castle grounds are. Lencer, CC BY-SA 3.0 via Wikimedia Commons



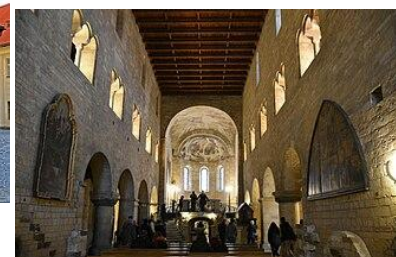
Prague Castle



Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, CC BY 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons, right

BugWarp, CC BY 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons

Shown center is the Basilica of St. George with the two white towers which sits behind the Cathedral. Richard Mortel from



As you can see from the interior image at right, the Basilica is rather

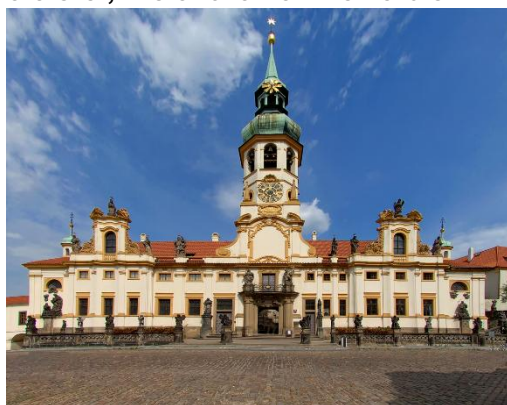
long and narrow in width. The Basilica is the oldest surviving church building on the castle grounds, dating from 920. It is Romanesque in style. The basilica was important to the spreading of Christianity in Bohemia, serving as the spiritual center of the country until Prague was named as an Archdiocese in 973.

Prague Castle currently serves as the residence and workplace of the current president of the Czech Republic, similar to our White House. It was built in the 800's. Originally it served the Kings of Bohemia. And just as we refer sometimes to the White House to mean our president and all of his appointees, so the term "Prague Castle" simply means the Czech president and his staff. And just as the White House has a stash of art and precious items, the Bohemian Crown Jewels are kept within a hidden room inside the castle. Prague Castle is the largest ancient castle in the world. It is 750,000 square feet in area. It is the biggest attraction for tourists in the Czech Republic. The castle has undergone various iterations due to normal wear and tears, from wars and from at least one fire. The last major renovations happened in the late 1700's.

The change from being a royal castle to the home of the president occurred in 1918 when the Czechoslovak Republic was formed. Some renovations occurred at this time and by 1929 the Cathedral was finished. But in 1939, the Germans Nazi invasion resulted in the castle being taken by Hitler, who spent one night there, enjoying his newest possession. It was then used as a headquarters for the German Reich Protector of Moravia and Bohemia.

In 1948, the country became part of the USSR and the castle served as offices of the communist Czechoslovak government. The in 1993 when Czechoslovakia was divided into two countries, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, the castle began serving as the residence of the Czech president. The castle also has several museums, including an art museum, a toy museum, and a photo gallery of the castle.

After touring the castle, we next visited a Marian shrine known at Loreto Prague. This shrine has a cloister, the church of the Lord's Birth, the Santa Casa, and a clock tower with a famous chime.



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Originally a small church known as the Holy Hut was built on the site beginning in 1626 with consecration in 1631. Over time it became a place of pilgrimage. It is a simple building of stone with a copy of the statue of Our Lady of Loreto inside. Later a church was built around the Holy Hut called the Church of the Nativity which was consecrated in 1737.

The complex includes the shrine, the church and the cloisters and has 6 chapels surrounding it. In 1695 the clock tower began ringing its chimes which consist of thirty different size bells. We were also able to view the site's large collection of monstrances.

Next, we went to see the famous infant Jesus of Prague statue in the Church of Our Lady of Victories. The 19" high statue is made of wood but coated in wax. It depicts Jesus as a young child holding a globus cruciger of Spanish origin in his left hand and his right hand raised in benediction. (A globus cruciger is an orb or ball with a cross mounted on the top and has been a symbol of Christianity for centuries, representing Christ's dominion over the world.) The Carmelite nuns now own the statue and regularly change the vestments made of luxurious fabrics, depending upon the liturgical season, following the color scheme Priests wear at different liturgical times.

The Infant first appeared in 1556, when María Maximiliana Manriquez de Lara y Mendoza brought the image to Bohemia upon her marriage to Czech nobleman. Legend surrounding the statue claims that the statue once belonged to Teresa of Ávila, who had given the statue to Maria's mother who then gifted the statue to her daughter as a wedding present. In 1587, Maria, following her own mother's example, gave the statue to her daughter, Polyxena of Lobkowitz, as a wedding present. In 1628 the Princess gave the statue to the Discalced Carmelite friars. She is reported to have told the friars that it was her dearest possession and that if they honored the statue, they would never be poor. The friars then installed the statute in the oratory of the monastery of Our Lady of Victory. Special devotions to Jesus were offered the twice a day and the Carmelite nuns professed their vows of poverty before the image.



VitVit, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons, Left Infant Jesus of Prague in the niche where it is installed. Right image taken in a different liturgical season vestments show the hands more clearly. © Jorge

Royan / <http://www.royan.com.ar>, right The Carmelite novitiate was transferred to Munich in 1630, leaving the statue in the monastery. Then followed disturbances in Bohemia due to the Thirty Years War. In 1631, the Swedish army took possession of Prague and the Monastery was plundered. The statue of the Infant Jesus was thrown in a rubbish pile and left to rot. In the process it's hands broke off. It was not until sometime in 1637 that the statue was found and replaced in the oratory. The priest who found the statue was praying before it one day when heard a voice telling him to replace its hands and he would receive peace. And also, that the more the infant



Jesus was honored, the more he would be blessed.

Ever since then, the statue has had many worshipers from around the world who come to honor the Holy Child. Many claim to have received blessings and miracles by pleading for their cause in front of the Infant Jesus of Prague. In 1741, the statue was moved to the epistle side of the Church of Our Lady of Victories in Prague.

Our next stop was the Church of Saint Nicholas originally a Jesuit church. This is a beautiful Baroque church built between 1704 and 1755. It replaced a 13th century Gothic church, which had been consecrated to St. Nicholas. This church is considered the best example of Prague Baroque architecture and has a lovely interior. The belfry of the church is adjacent to the church but is owned by the city rather than by the church. The belfry and the dome of the church are the same height. Highlighting the unique aesthetic impact of the building is the direct connection of the adjacent slender belfry and the church's massive dome. Both are about 260 feet tall. The belfry is Rococo in form. The interior of the Dome is the highest in Prague.



Following the abolition of the Jesuit Order by Pope Clement XIV, St Nicholas became the main parish church of the area known as Lesser Town in 1775. During the Communist era the church tower was used as an observatory for State Security since from the tower it was possible to keep watch on the American and Yugoslav embassies and the access route to the West German embassy. Bobby-John de Bot, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons , St. Nicholas church, Right.

Interior view of the dome, below left, Ludek, CC BY-SA 3.0 via Wikimedia Commons, below left and right images Interior of the church, right image.



We attended Mass here before we headed out to see a bit more of Prague, which is just beautiful. One of my favorite sights here is the Prague astronomical clock. The clock, below right, is from medieval times and is attached to the Old Town Hall.

Steve Collis from Melbourne, Australia, CC BY 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons

There are three main components to the clock: an astronomical dial, which shows the moon and stars; statues of various saints and other sculptures that move around hourly, a figure of a skeleton that represents Death which strikes the time hourly; and a calendar dial which represents the months. We made sure to be seated across from the clock at a café before noon so we could see the clock in action while enjoying a lunch break.

Below is a photo of the moving statues of the apostles of Prague astronomical clock. They are the third couple: Jude Thaddaeus and Philip. Ludek, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons





Then we took a walk across the Charles Bridge, shown left., CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons. This bridge of stone was built in medieval times with arches to support the traffic, which was a combination of humans walking across the bridge and horse traffic. The bridge crosses the Vltava River. It was begun in 1357, while Charles IV was king. Since it was the only way to cross the river on foot or horse, it was essential connection between the castle area and the old town area. It also facilitated international trade

between eastern and western Europe. The bridge is 1693 feet long and 33 feet wide. The bridge has three towers for protection. And as previously mentioned there are about 30 statues lining the bridge. Of course modern traffic is much heavier so the bridge is currently undergoing a 20 year, begun in 2019 project to inspect and reinforce the bridge



Various statues on the bridge were added in the 1600's, including a cross seen the old photo of the bridge left.

Nakl. pohlednic Z. Broz, Praha, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

We found the sculpture of John of Nepomuk.

Zp, CC BY-SA 2.5, via Wikimedia Commons, below



Another one of the statues we particularly searched for was that of Sts. Cyril and Methodius, whom we had learned about at Velehrad Monastery earlier on this pilgrimage.

But it was time to leave Prague and continue our walk. But our next stop was only nine mile away: Budeč

When we were learning about King Wencelas, we found that he had



been sent to school in Budeč. But our reason for heading there was to see the Church of Sts. Peter and Paul and the wall on the west side of the church that was part of a former fortification. It is also the oldest preserved building in the Czech Republic.

User:Miaow Miaow, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

The settlement of Budeč once covered about 54 acres and is considered to be among the largest settlement from early medieval times in the country. Archaeologists have found evidence that the hill on which Budeč was built was inhabited from the middle bronze age. Below the first Slavic wall built in the

800's, the remains of a prehistoric wall has been found. The church of Sts. Peter and Paul was begun around 895. The church is a rotunda. And we could see a portion of the Slavic wall extending from the building. I find that it is always humbling to be in a building that is so old. Everything in the USA is very new in comparison!

Then we headed west and slightly south to the town of Příbram to visit a shrine that dates back many centuries, to Svata Hora. Svata Hora means Holy Mountain and the shrine Of our Lady of Svata Hora sits there on the top of what turned out to be more of a hilltop than a mountain.

Every day, Masses and other devotions are held at the Shrine. There is a miraculous statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary at the church as well as many beautiful frescoes on the walls, art works, and silver on the altar. The Shrine is protected as a national monument. It is a Baroque Monastery with cloisters and chapels. The worshipping of Mary at this Shrine began in the 1300's when the Bishop carved the statue. The Chapel was acquired by the Jesuits in 1647 who then built a beautiful basilica of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, completed in 1675. 1,480-foot-long staircase was built to connect the Shrine to the town in 1685. The staircase was roofed around 1727.



Honza Groh, CC BY 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons, left.

In the town of Příbram, the town center has the Church of Saint James the Great. It is of Gothic design built in the early 1200's and is the oldest building in Příbram. The current form of the church dates from 1869, when the tower acquired four side Neo-Gothic turrets. The most valuable interior decoration includes two wood carvings by Ignác František Platzer and a tin baptismal font from 1511.

Church of Saint James the Great, below left.

VitVit, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons, below left

Church of Saint Adalbert

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We also briefly visited the Church of Saint Adalbert in the main square of nearby Brezové Hory as we



passed through the town. It dates from 1889.

It was time to head south on our way to Austria but we had one more stop on the way at České Budějovice. This city is found in southern portion of the country, almost directly south of Prague and fairly close to the border with Austria. It is the largest city in the region. České Budějovice serves as the seat of the Diocese of České Budějovice. It is also home to the University of South Bohemia. And for you beer fans, it is well known as the site of the Budweiser Budvar Brewery. The old town center has been well preserved although now surrounded by a modern city.

In written sources, the village of Budějovice was first mention in 1251. By 1265, a Royal City had been developed from the village with fortifications and three city gates for protection. As a result, it became the political and economic center of southern Bohemia. The city thrived on trade, crafts, and a nearby silver mine. Many of the settlers were German speaking. The fortifications of the city meant it

survived well during the Hussite Wars but the Thirty Years' War interfered with the city's growth. In 1641 a large fire destroyed about 2/3 of the city. Reconstruction followed the fire over the next few decades mostly in Baroque style of architecture. Pope Pius VI named the city as the seat of a new Diocese of České Budějovice. The Church of Saint Nicholas was elevated to a cathedral at that time.



Black Tower and Cathedral of St. Nicholas, left. VitVit, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons

The Cathedral of Saint Nicholas is a three-nave basilica, located near the main city square. After a fire in 1641, it was rebuilt in the Renaissance style.

VitVit, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons

The foundation stone of the original parish church was laid in 1265, as the royal city was being developed. Consecration did not occur until 1297, and even then, the church was not complete. It took until the mid-1300's to complete the building. But then a fire damaged the church and required significant repairs between 1513 and 1518. The separate bell Tower, known as the Black Tower, was added in the 1500's. It underwent reconstruction again in the 17th century resulting in the baroque façade it currently shows. In



1785 the interior was updated as it became the Cathedral of the Diocese.

SchiDD, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons, Chapel in the Cathedral left and view of main Altar, right.

German remained the most common language in the city until about 1880 when the began Czech speakers began to become the dominant population. Eventually the German speaking population fell below 20% and Czech became the only official language in the city. But the relationship between the German speakers and Czech speakers were generally peaceful



until Nazism began to surface in the 1930's. It was occupied by the Germans in WW II and received significant damage by USA air force bombings on some significant sites. After the war ended, the Germans were all expelled by the USSR. Fortunately, the bombing during the war did not damage the city center which is well preserved and today is protected as a national monument and is shown left. We walked the city center after we visited the Cathedral. Tohma, CC BY-SA 4.0, via



Wikimedia Commons

But then it was time to head out of the Czech Republic and continue on our walk so we headed southeast to enter the country of Austria with our first stop to be in Vienna. While we didn't reach Vienna we did make it across the Austrian border. Thanks for participating!

Your Tour Director,
Kathy Scharer